

R E P O R T

FROM THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON

POST-OFFICE COMMUNICATION
WITH IRELAND;

TOGETHER WITH THE

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,

AND

APPENDIX.

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
11 June 1841.*

Martis, 25^a die Maii, 1841.

Ordered, THAT a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the Post-office Communication between Great Britain and Ireland.

Veneris, 28^a die Maii, 1841.

And a Committee was nominated of—

Lord Viscount Ingestre.	Mr. Winston Barron.
Sir Henry Parnell.	Mr. Shaw.
Mr. William Owen Stanley.	Mr. Coory.
Mr. Lucas.	Mr. Blair.
Sir Robert Ferguson.	Lord Robert Grosvenor.
Sir Denham Mooreys.	Mr. Dunbar.
Sir Ormsby Gore.	Mr. Philip Miles.
Captain Winnington.	

Ordered, THAT the said Committee have power to send for Persons, Papers, and Records.

Ordered, THAT Five be the Quorum of the said Committee.

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The SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to inquire into the POST OFFICE COMMUNICATION between *Great Britain and Ireland*, and to whom a Petition was referred, and who were empowered to report the MINUTES OF EVIDENCE taken before them to the House;—HAVE examined the matters to them referred, and have agreed to the following REPORT:

YOUR Committee have commenced the inquiry referred to them, but in consequence of the approaching termination of the present Session, they have not considered it expedient to incur Expense by summoning Witnesses from a distance. They therefore simply report the Evidence already taken before them, and in so doing state their opinion, that there is good ground for supposing that great improvement may be made in the Post-office Communication with Ireland, and that the subject is well worthy the attention of this House. And they further express their hope that a Committee may be appointed to inquire into this important subject in a future Session.

11 June 1841.

ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS.

Luna, 7^{te} die Junii, 1841.

Present:

Mr. P. Miles.
 Sir R. Ferguson.
 Mr. Blair.
 Lord Ingestre.
 Mr. W. O. Stanley.

Mr. Corry.
 Mr. Dundas.
 Capt. Warrington.
 Mr. O. Gore.
 Mr. Lucas.

Veneris, 11^{te} die Junii, 1841.

Present:

LORD INGESTRE IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. W. O. Stanley.
 Sir R. Ferguson.

Mr. Barron.
 Mr. Corry.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Mercurii, 9^o die Junii, 1841.

MEMBERS PRESENT.

Mr. W. Barron.
Mr. Corry.
Sir Robert Ferguson.
Mr. Ormsby Gore.
Lord Viscount Ingestre.

Mr. Lucas.
Sir Denham Norreys.
Sir H. Parnell.
Mr. Shaw.
Mr. W. O. Stanley.

LORD VISCOUNT INGESTRE, IN THE CHAIR.

George Stow, Esq. called in; and Examined.

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1. *Chairman.*] YOU are Superintendent of Mail Coaches?—I am.
2. You attend the Committee by Colonel Maberly's direction?—I do.
3. The Committee would wish to be informed of the existing mode of the transmission of letters from London to Dublin?—Perhaps I had better explain that from London, the Dublin mails are taken to Liverpool by railway; the mail leaving the Post-office at eight o'clock in the evening, and reaching Liverpool at six the next morning, it is put on board the packet at about half-past six, and is due in Dublin between half-past six and seven in the evening, in time for the dispatch of all the mails into the interior of Ireland at nine o'clock.
4. Can you state the time required for sorting the letters after the mail arrives in Dublin?—I think that information can best be obtained from Mr. Godhy, the secretary of the Irish office.
5. *Mr. Shaw.*] You state that the train arrives in Liverpool at six o'clock in the morning, how soon after does the packet leave?—I believe the average time is 40 minutes after six.
6. Can you state what is the usual time occupied in the passage across?—The average passage is 12 hours.
7. *Chairman.*] What time do you allow from the landing of the mail to the letters reaching the Post-office?—I do not exactly know; it goes by the railway from Kingstown; but I think about half an hour.
8. Can you state the average time that the conveyance of the mail from Post-office to Post-office would occupy?—About 23 hours, I think; I have gone with the mail myself in 23 hours.
9. *Mr. Shaw.*] At what time do the country mails leave Dublin?—All at nine o'clock.
10. *Sir R. Ferguson.*] Can you give the Committee any information as to the proposed change by embarking the mails on the Cheshire side of the Mersey?—We propose to make the change on the 15th of this month by sending the mails from Crewe through Chester to Birkenhead, to be embarked at Birkenhead-ferry.
11. *Mr. Ormsby Gore.*] Can you state what time that will save?—About half an hour.
12. *Mr. W. O. Stanley.*] Can you state what accommodation there will be at the Birkenhead side of the river Mersey?—For the mails we make provision; they will be sent from the railway station at Birkenhead to the pier in a mail-cart, and embarked in a boat provided by the Admiralty.
13. *Mr. Corry.*] Can a steamer come alongside the pier at high water?—I believe not, but it can come within a very short distance.

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14. *Chairman.*] Where is the steamer to lie?—Close off the pier.
15. *Mr. Ormsby Gore.*] You state that the present average time occupied in the conveyance of the mail is 23 hours, and that by the mail being sent from the Birkenhead side of the Mersey, the time occupied will be 22 hours and a half?—Yes.
16. *Sir Denham Norreys.*] What distance will the railway station be from the pier?—About three or four hundred yards.
17. How much time will be saved by the distance, and by the greater facility in putting the mail on board?—The saving in distance is eight miles, and I should say, you might get the mails on board in 12 minutes from the station at Birkenhead.
18. What then should you say would be the saving in time?—We shall do away with all sorting in Liverpool, which occupies 20 minutes, and there is the distance of eight miles saved, which is perhaps a saving of a quarter of an hour.
19. That will be 35 minutes?—Yes.
20. Is there not also greater facility for putting the mail on board at Birkenhead?—At times there is greater facility at Liverpool, because the packet can come up to the pier.
21. Is not the railway station at Birkenhead much nearer than it is at Liverpool?—Much nearer.
22. Have the Post-office taken into their consideration the possibility of increasing the speed at which letters are carried on the line through Cheshire?—They have.
23. Are any arrangements in progress for the purpose of increasing the speed?—They are not, but I have had a conversation with Colonel Maberly upon the subject this morning.
24. You have had no negotiation as yet with the railway companies, as to the increase of speed?—We have not.
25. Do you propose to have any such negotiation?—I take for granted that we shall.
26. What is the average speed at which a letter from the station at Easton-square travels, till it is delivered in Liverpool?—I am not exactly prepared to state, but I think it is 24 miles an hour.
27. Is there any doubt that that amount of speed can be considerably increased, now that the railway is perfectly settled?—I am not prepared to say that it could; I apprehend that the railway directors would object to increasing it; they have increased between London and Birmingham half an hour in the last six months.
28. *Chairman.*] Are you aware of the time occupied in the change of the trains in Birmingham?—Twenty minutes is the time allowed, and if they exceed that, they make it up afterwards.
29. By having a train to go off the moment the mail arrived from London, might not time be saved?—Yes, that 20 minutes is not required by the Post-office, but the Railway Company would never, I apprehend, consent to the train starting immediately; in fact, they wished for more than 20 minutes, but we struck off 10 minutes.
30. *Sir D. Norreys.*] The Post-office have the power of preventing that delay?—Yes.
31. It is simply a question of expense?—Yes.
32. *Chairman.*] But in your opinion, the lines being divided into two lines, causes that delay in the mails?—We do not, as far as we are concerned, require above five or 10 minutes' stop.
33. *Sir D. Norreys.*] Have you any necessary delay at Wolverton?—Not for the Post-office; that is for changing engines.
34. *Sir R. Ferguson.*] Have you any necessary delay at Crewe in transferring the mail from the Grand Junction to the Chester Railway?—We shall require five minutes, perhaps, for that service.
35. *Chairman.*] In the average you have given of time, I believe you have taken into consideration the delays on the one hand, and the time saved on the other?—Yes.
36. With respect to the mails going from Birkenhead-ferry, what arrangements are made for the mails from Scotland and the northern districts, coming through
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Liverpool, to be put on board the packet to Ireland?—They will be brought up to Parkside, which is about midway between Liverpool and Manchester, and from thence they will be taken on by a special train to Liverpool, reaching Liverpool before the London mail.

37. Will that occasion a delay in the sorting of letters on the other side of the Mersey?—No, they will be sorted at Liverpool, but they will be in there earlier than they are now.

38. All the letters are now sorted together, both of the London and the northern mails?—Yes.

39. Then, would you require a separate sorting again in Dublin or on board the packet?—They are all sorted in Dublin again; there may be some large towns for which bags are made up, but I do not think there are many.

40. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] Then there is of necessity some delay after the mail arrives in Dublin, owing to the sorting?—Yes.

41. You cannot say what that delay is?—I should say an hour at least.

42. Chairman.] Could any time be saved by having on board the packet a Post-office agent to sort the letters?—I should say it would be impossible to sort the letters in the packet for the whole of Ireland; it would add also double sets of bags to the towns in Ireland, and the coaches could not convey them.

43. Mr. Ormsby Gore.] You are speaking of the London letters passing from England to Ireland?—Yes.

44. What change would occur if you made the packet station on the south side of the Mersey, as you propose doing on the 15th of this month for the London letters; you say that the letters from the north are sent from Parkside to Liverpool, leaving sufficient time to sort them at Liverpool; but if you change the station to the southern side of the Mersey, would Parkside be the point where you would break off?—Yes.

45. And cross from Liverpool to Birkenhead?—Yes; or put the bags on board the steamer, without touching at Birkenhead; I believe that is the intention, putting them on board before the London mail arrives at Birkenhead.

46. Sir D. Norreys.] What time does the train stop at Wolverton?—Ten minutes.

47. Are those stoppages requisite for the Post-office purposes?—They are not; at a town like Birmingham, we should require some little stoppage to transfer our own bags, but five or ten minutes would do for that.

48. Then at least 20 minutes might be saved in the transmission of letters to Dublin, by not stopping on the road?—Yes.

49. And half an hour will be saved by the proposed alteration?—Yes.

50. Mr. Stow.] What time do you allow for putting letters on board?—We allow 20 minutes in our bill, but I think it ought to be done in 12.

51. Do you mean at all times and in all tides?—That I am not prepared to say.

52. Do you know whether, generally, the packets can lie close to the pier?—Yes, they can; their moorings are close to the pier.

53. Does not that depend upon the tide?—I know that Captain Bevis, who is the superintendent of the packet station, at Liverpool, has given his opinion that Birkenhead is the proper place to embark the mails at.

54. But do you believe, generally speaking, that the packet can be so close to the pier as to allow the bags to be put on board in 12 minutes?—That is my impression.

55. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] Are you aware that the Government have entered into a contract for boats to convey passengers and bags to the steamers?—I am not aware.

56. The arrangement is to employ small open boats?—Yes, for the conveyance of the bags to the packet.

57. Mr. Ormsby Gore.] As to the saving of time at Wolverton and Birmingham, you can only speak so far as your knowledge goes of the Post-office communication; you do not speak as to the time necessary to stop for the change of engine?—No, certainly not; my own impression is, that the railway companies would object to a diminution of the time at those places, and that if it was forced upon them the Post-office must pay for it.

58. Mr. Stow.] Will you refer to the order of the House of Commons, made on the 6th of May 1841, No. 296, as to the Liverpool and Kingstown mails, and state on what number of days between the 2d of January 1840, and the 14th of February 1841, inclusive, the evening mail-coaches left Dublin without the London mail?—One hundred and twenty-five.

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59. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] What is the latest moment at which the London mails arriving in Dublin can be forwarded inland?—I will endeavour to obtain that information.

60. Mr. Stow.] On what number of days would the saving of an hour in the transit have permitted of the London letters being dispatched by the evening mails from Dublin, between the 2d of January and the 14th of February 1841?—I will endeavour to obtain that information.

61. Chairman.] Will you proceed to state the course of the mail which leaves London in the morning?—The day mail leaves London in the morning at 15 minutes past nine; it is due at the Liverpool station at seven o'clock in the evening; the packet ought to leave Liverpool about half-past seven, and ought to reach Dublin about half-past seven, assuming the average passage at 12 hours.

62. Mr. Stow.] Do you know whether the letters arrive in Dublin in time to be dispatched by any of the early mails from Dublin, or by the penny post?—I am not prepared to state whether they do, but they ought to arrive in time for the day mails from Dublin, provided the packet makes a good passage; for instance, there are day mails to Belfast, Cork, and Kilkenny, they ought to arrive in time for these.

63. At what time do the Belfast, and Cork, and Kilkenny mails leave Dublin?—The Belfast day mail leaves at 8 o'clock, the Cork mail leaves at 11, the Kilkenny leaves at half-past 8 in the morning.

64. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] Then the letters can never arrive in time for the Belfast and Kilkenny mails?—I have taken the average passage at 12 hours, the mail frequently arrives earlier; I have been myself in Dublin at seven o'clock.

65. But then you say an hour is required for the sorting?—Not for the letters that arrive in the morning; I think so long a time would not be required for those.

66. Mr. Stow.] Do you know at what hour the letters are dispatched within the penny post district for delivery?—I do not.

67. Chairman.] Proceed to state the time of leaving Dublin of the mail which arrives in London in the morning?—The mail leaves the Post-office at Dublin at half-past 10 o'clock at night; it should reach Liverpool between 10 and 11 in the morning; the bags remain till seven in the evening, and are brought into London at six o'clock the following morning.

68. Mr. Stow.] With respect to the letters leaving Dublin in the morning for London, what course do they take?—They come to Holyhead; that packet leaves Kingstown at half-past eight in the morning, and reaches Holyhead about half-past two in the afternoon.

69. What, then, is the course of those letters?—They travel by mail-coach from Holyhead to the railway station at Hartford.

70. At what hour does it leave Holyhead?—Twenty minutes past four in the afternoon; it now reaches Chester at 1. 53 minutes A. M. and Hartford at four o'clock, where it falls in with the up day mail, and reaches the Post-office, London, at two o'clock in the afternoon, and is delivered on that afternoon about three o'clock.

71. Chairman.] Will you explain the delay that occurs at Holyhead?—That is given as a sort of margin for the packet, for we work up to the railroad, and we cannot depend upon the arrival of the packet to too great a nicety.

72. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] After the 15th of June the mail-coach will stop at Hartford?—No; the mail-coach will stop at Chester, and the railway will take the mail on at the same time.

73. Do you know any reason why those letters should not leave Holyhead immediately upon the arrival of the packet, and reach London by six o'clock in the morning?—It is not possible.

74. Chairman.] Supposing a packet to leave Kingstown for Liverpool in the morning, would it not be possible to have letters in London by that means in time for the morning delivery?—A very early dispatch might do it, but not a dispatch at half-past eight; you must allow 23 hours for the journey.

75. What is the latest hour at which letters arriving in London can be delivered by the morning delivery?—The hour at which they ought to arrive is six o'clock, but of course at seven, or half-past seven, they would fall in with the delivery; they would detain the delivery for them if they were late.

76. Do not you imagine that if the mails were to arrive in Dublin half an hour or a quarter of an hour earlier than they now do, that arrangement might be effected?—

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effected?—I do not know what time it would require after the arrival of the mails in Dublin, before the English packets could be dispatched, but I think any attempt to make the times of arrival of the mails in Dublin earlier than they now are, would produce great inconvenience and complaint.

77. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] You say that the letters reach Holyhead at half-past two, on the average; could they not leave Holyhead at three?—They could if you could ensure the arrival of the packets at half-past two in all cases.

78. What is the distance from Holyhead to Chester?—Eighty-five miles.

79. Upon the average could not the mail-coaches travel those 85 miles in eight hours?—I should say decidedly not.

80. What time could they do it in?—We have great difficulty in getting it done in nine hours and a half now.

81. Are you not aware that there are persons at present offering to contract to do it in eight and even seven hours?—No, I am not.

82. What is the rate at which the Birmingham, Shrewsbury, and Holyhead mail runs?—The distance from Birmingham to Holyhead is 150 miles six furlongs, and they take 15 hours 27 minutes.

83. How many miles an hour is that?—About ten.

84. If the Birmingham, Shrewsbury, and Holyhead mail runs 10 miles an hour why could not the Chester and Holyhead do the same?—I am not aware that there is anything in the state of the road to prevent it, but we have always had great difficulty in working it at any speed on that line.

85. Is not that because you will not give mileage sufficient?—I am not aware.

86. Even supposing that you are obliged to run that mail at nine miles and a half an hour, at what hour would you arrive at Chester, leaving Holyhead at three?—You might save half an hour by it.

87. How long would a train be taking the mail from Chester to London?—I have not that bill with me, but I think they are to take an hour to go from Chester to Crewe.

88. How long from Crewe to London?—About eight hours.

89. Consequently, by the existing line from Holyhead through Chester, letters might arrive by a special train in London by half-past nine in the morning, if they left Holyhead at three and Dublin at eight in the morning?—Yes, if we could get the mails worked at the rate of 10 miles an hour.

90. Mr. Sten.] Are you aware that the Government contract mail-boat leaves Kingstown every evening at half-past five o'clock?—Yes.

91. What letters does that mail-boat carry?—That is for the Yorkshire and Lancashire letters; it reaches Liverpool on the average about five in the morning; the up-day London mail has left, but the letters are conveyed into all parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire at nine in the morning, which arrive by that packet.

92. Does that mail-boat carry any London letters?—No; it was established chiefly for the Lancashire correspondence, and it is now carried on to Hull, to York, and to Leeds.

93. Mr. Corry.] Does that mail carry letters for Birmingham?—It does; there is a train between Birmingham and Liverpool in the course of the day, which would convey any letters arriving by that packet; it leaves at half-past 10 or 11.

94. What letters go from Holyhead to Dublin?—That packet, I believe, leaves Holyhead about half-past six in the evening, after the arrival of the mail-coach from Birmingham, and it would take all the letters from the line of road; it would not take any London letters; and it reaches Kingstown about half-past twelve at night.

95. Chairman.] The object of sending that mail being probably that the mail must return, and therefore it takes the country letters?—Yes, I apprehend so.

96. And also for the conveyance of passengers?—Yes.

97. Mr. Corry.] You state, that letters from Dublin to Birmingham are forwarded by the packet which leaves Kingstown at half-past five o'clock; are letters from Dublin to Birmingham forwarded also by the packet which leaves Kingstown at half past 10 o'clock?—Yes; I believe they are.

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98. Would it not be a great convenience if a train were to start from Liverpool on the arrival of that mail?—Yes.

99. There is one that starts in time from the Kingstown mail-packet, provided the distance from Kingstown to the station-house be performed in 12 hours?—Yes.

100. Mr. Stos.] Can you say on the whole how many packets ply between Dublin and Liverpool and Holyhead for the purpose of carrying letters?—There are two daily between Liverpool and Kingstown, and one daily between Holyhead and Kingstown.

101. Both ways?—Yes.

102. Mr. W. O. Stanley.] At present the mail which leaves London at a quarter past nine o'clock in the morning is transmitted through Chester, Bangor, and Caernarvon?—No; it is sent through Liverpool.

103. Are you aware that communications have been frequently made to the Post-office by Sir Henry Parnell and others, to change the hour of sailing of the Holyhead packet from the evening to the day?—I am not aware; it is most probable that a communication of that kind would not be referred to me.

104. What difficulty would there be in transmitting the letters by Chester, Bangor, and Holyhead, instead of transmitting them by Shrewsbury?—I am not aware that there would be any difficulty, but it would be necessary to keep up our present Birmingham and Shrewsbury line of road; the mail must run through to Shrewsbury.

105. Are there any great quantities of Irish letters passing between Birmingham, Shrewsbury, and Holyhead to Dublin?—I should think so; I am not prepared to state the number, for I am not in the habit of seeing the correspondence, but I know that the surveyor of the district attaches great importance to that correspondence.

106. Can you obtain the number of letters?—I could procure a return certainly, for the Committee.

107. What inconvenience would there be in sending that mail on to Holyhead instead of letting it stop at Bangor and Caernarvon; by doing so you would be able to let that packet sail at two o'clock in the day instead of sailing at half-past six at night?—This could be done, but the Shrewsbury Line would be cut off from Ireland.

108. Mr. Stos.] Then the morning letters from London are transmitted to Dublin by Liverpool, and the morning letters from Dublin are transmitted to London by Holyhead?—Precisely so.

109. Chairman.] Are you aware of any inconvenience which would result to the Post-office by the letters which arrive by the packet at Liverpool at half-past 10 being immediately forwarded to London?—I do not see that any advantage would arise from it, for they would not get to the Post-office till after the Post-office was closed, and they would be equally well sorted in the morning when the whole force of the office was upon the letters.

110. Mr. Corry.] Great advantage would arise to all the intermediate places; they would arrive at Birmingham sooner, would they not?—They would. Manchester and all parts of Lancashire now get their letters immediately.

111. Chairman.] Would it not be in the power of passengers to get to London in the day, which now they cannot?—Certainly it would.

112. Mr. Stos.] Can you state of what advantage, as regards the Post-office, the packet leaving Kingstown at half-past five in the evening is?—The object is to get the correspondence into Lancashire and Yorkshire.

113. For that purpose, at what hour must the letters be put into the Dublin Post-office?—I should suppose an hour before, but I do not know exactly.

114. Are you aware that the packet which leaves Kingstown at half-past five is used principally for the conveyance of passengers, and that the packet leaving at half-past 10 is used principally for letters?—Yes, that is the fact.

115. Chairman.] Does that circumstance arise from passengers not being able to proceed to London in ordinary cases, if they arrive at Liverpool by the packet which leaves Dublin at half-past 10?—I should think that would have some influence with the passengers.

116. The packet that leaves at half-past 10 is the Government packet?—Yes the other is the contract packet.

117. Are

117. Are you not aware that considerable expense might be saved if more passengers went by that vessel?—I imagine such would be the case.

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118. The effect now is, that the passengers go by the contract boat, and the letters by the Government boat?—Yes.

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119. Mr. Shaw.] Can you state what the difference is in the time of the transmission of letters by water and by land by means of steam power?—I believe we average that we travel by railway 20 miles an hour, and by steam 10 miles an hour; I know that by the Commissioners on the West India Mails, before whom I was examined; the mail coaches were taken at 10, the steam-boats at 9, and the railroads at 20 miles an hour.

120. Then, for the purpose of speed, it is obvious that the greater the land carriage, as compared with the voyage, the better?—Undoubtedly.